

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SUVA 00851 01 OF 02 140326Z

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04

NSAE-00 SIL-01 AS-01 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 L-03

NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 OMB-01

TRSE-00 /080 W

-----045766 140445Z /13

R 130035Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY SUVA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6290

INFO AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

CINCPAC HONOLULU

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 SUVA 0851

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, FJ

SUBJECT: FIJI DOCK STRIKE

REF: SUVA 0849

FOLLOWING IS THE TEXT OF SPEECH DELIVERED OVER RADIO FIJI
BY TVE PRIME MINISTER, RATU SIR KAMISESE MARA, ON WEDNESDAY
EVENING, JULY 6, 1977, CONCERNING THE WATERSIDE WORKER'S
AND SEAMEN'S UNION STRIKE. NOTE IS PARTICULAR PARA. 6 WHICH
GIVES PM'S REASON FOR DECLARING STRIKE ILLEGAL.
BEGIN TEXT

1. "I AM SPEAKING TO YOU TODAY ON THE STRIKE BY THE
WATERSIDE WORKERS AND SEAMEN'S UNION WHICH COMMENCED AT
8 O'CLOCK YESTERDAY MORNING.

2. FIRST OF ALL I MUST MAKE IT QUITE CLEAR THAT THIS IS AN
ILLEGAL STRIKE.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 SUVA 00851 01 OF 02 140326Z

3. MOREOVER, IT WAS BEGUN THE VERY MORNING AFTER THE
INDUSTRIAL ADVISER TO THE UNION ASSURED ME, BEFORE
MEMBERS OF THE TRIPARTITE COMMITTEE THAT HE WOULD NEED
TWO OR THREE DAYS TO CONSIDER THE MATTER AND THEN
RESUME DISCUSSION WITH THE PORTS AUTHORITY OF FIJI.

4. "HE NEVER GAVE US ANY INDICATION THAT NEGOTIATION WAS AT AN END AND THAT HE WAS CALLING A STRIKE NEXT DAY.

5. "EVERY EFFORT HAS BEEN MADE TO FIND SOLUTIONS TO THE DISPUTE. AND FINALLY AT THE REQUEST OF THE INDUSTRIAL ADVISER, AND ON THE ADVICE OF THE MINISTER OF LABOUR, I AGREED TO SEE THE ADVISER WITH MY COLLEAGUES ON THE TRIPARTITE COMMITTEE.

6. " NO ONE CAN SAY THAT THE UNION HAS NOT HAD EVERY OPPORTUNITY. BUT DESPITE THIS THEY HAVE GONE ON STRIKE WITHOUT EXHAUSTING AVAILABLE MEANS OF RESOLVING THE PROBLEM.

7. "LET US MAKE NO MISTAKE. THIS UNION - OR AT ANY RATE ITS LEADERS - ARE CHALLENGING THE LAW, THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PEOPLE OF THIS COUNTRY. AND THEY ARE PREPARED TO CAUSE UNTOLD HARDSHIP TO COUNTLESS PEOPLE FOR THE SELFISH ENDS OF A SMALL NUMBER.

8. "DOCKERS ARE ALREADY RECEIVING \$1.20 AN HOUR WHICH IS MORE THAN MANY OTHER WORKERS IN THE INDUSTRY THE PORT AUTHORITY HAS INCREASED THEIR INITIAL OFFER OF A SEVEN PERCENT RISE, TO A TEN PERCENT RISE.

9. "MANY OTHER COUNTRIES HAVE SET LOWER LIMITS THAN
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PAGE 03 SUVA 00851 01 OF 02 140326Z

TEN PER CENT. THE UK LIMIT IS THREE PERCENT, NEW ZEALAND SIX PERCENT AND AUSTRALIA EIGHT PERCENT. THE TEN PERCENT IS THE LEVEL THAT OTHER UNIONS IN THIS COUNTRY HAVE BEEN SETTling FOR AND MANY WORKERS EARNING LESS THAN THE DOCKERS HAVE ACCEPTED THIS LEVEL IN THE INTERESTS OF THE NATION.

10. "THE TEN PERCENT HAS BEEN CAREFULLY CALCULATED AS THE MAXIMUM THAT THE ECONOMY IN OUR COUNTRY CAN AFFORD. IT HAS THE BACKING OF THE FTUC OF WHICH THE WATERSIDE WORKERS AND SEAMEN'S UNION IS A MEMBER (EVEN IF IT CLAIMS IT DID NOT SUBSCRIBE TO THE TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT) AND IS ALSO SUPPORTED BY THE EMPLOYERS' ASSOCIATION.

11. "IT WOULD GIVE DOCKWORKERS A STANDARD WAGE OF \$1.32 PER HOUR.

12. "I THINK YOU KNOW THERE ARE CONSIDERABLE OTHER BENEFITS THE DOCKERS ENJOY. FOR INSTANCE, THERE ARE 370 WORKERS ON THE SUVA OVERSEAS WHARF WHO RECEIVE A GUARANTEED MINIMUM WAGE CALCULATED ON A 40 HOUR WEEK, WHETHER THERE IS WORK AVAILABLE OR NOT.

13. "TO THESE WORKERS THE PAFIOFFER WOULD BE WORTH
\$52.80 A WEEK.

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PAGE 01 SUVA 00851 02 OF 02 140332Z
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TRSE-00 /080 W

-----045798 140445Z /13

R 130035Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY SUVA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6291
EHBAZ/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 1680
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
CINCPAC HONOLULU

UNCLAS SECTION 2 OF 2 SUVA 0851

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

14. "FURTHERMORE, THE PORTS AUTHORITY WAS OFFERING
A \$200,000 FUND FOR THE BENEFIT OF WORKERS AND THEIR
FAMILIES. THE INTENTION WAS THAT IT BE USED FOR LOW
INTEREST HOUSING LOANS, SCHOLARSHIPS AND IN CASES OF
HARDSHIP.

15. "WE HAD EVEN SUGGESTED IN TE TRIPARTITIE COMMITTEE
WAYS IN WHICH THIS OFFER MIGHT BE MODIFIED IN DISCUSSIONS
WITH THE PORTS AUTHORITY.

16. "BUT NO. THE UNION LEADERS DID NO EVEN TRY TO DISCUSS
IT, AND IT CAN ONLY BE ASSUMED THAT THEY HAVE BEEN BENT
ON STRIKE ACTION FROM THE OUTSET, AND A TAKE IT OR LEAVE
IT ATTITUDE, TANTAMOUNT TO PUTTING A PISTOL TO THE HEAD
OF THE COUNTRY.

17. "A MORE SINISTER ELEMENT IS THE ENDEAVOUR TO INVOLVE
OVERSEAS UNIONS IN TRYING TO WRECK THE FIJI ECONOMY. THIS
IS THE SECOND UNION LEADER WHO HAS TRIED THIS TACTIC THIS
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PAGE 02 SUVA 00851 02 OF 02 140332Z

YEAR. I CAN ONLY SAY IT SHOWS SINGULAR DISREGARD FOR THE PEOPLE - AND PARTICULARLY THE POOR PEOPLE OF THIS COUNTRY.

18. " IT IS NOT THE TYPE OF ACTION ON WHICH A SPIRIT OF YOUNG NATIONHOOD CAN BE BUILT. AND WHILE WE MAY HAVE OUR OWN VIEWS ON THE UNWARRANTABLE INTERFERENCE OF FOREIGNERS IN FIJI'S AFFAIRS, THE REAL CULPRITS WHO DESERVE OUR CENSURE ARE THOSE WHO INVOKE SUCH INTERFERENCE.

19. "ALREADY THERE IS OVER \$12 MILLION WORTH OF SUGAR IN JEOPARDY. IF GOODS AT PRESENT ON SHIPS FOR FIJI ARE NOT UNLOADED AND RETURNS OVEREASS, IT WILL ADD \$300,000 TO THEIR COST.

20. "THE UNION SAYS THEY WILL HANDLE LOCAL SHIPPING. ON THIS, THE FIRST QUESTION IS WHETHER ANY FURTHER RELIANCE CAN BE PLACED ON ANY UNDERTAKING THE GIVE.

21. "AND SECOND; WHAT BENEFIT IS IT TO RURAL AND ISLAND PEOPLE IF SHIPS RUN AND THERE ARE NO SUPPLIES TO FILL THEM? IF NO KEROSENE AND NO FLOUR COME INTO FIJI THEN THEY WILL RUN OUT AND ONCE AGAIN THE POORER PEOPLE AT THE END OF THE LINE WILL BE THE SUFFERERS.

22. "AND CAN YOU KNOW THAT YOUR COPRA WILL BE BOUGHT IF IT CANNOT BE EXPORTED.

23. "GOVERNMENT HAS ALREADY DECLARED ITS FIRM DETERMINATION TO KEEP THE PORTS OPEN AND THIS WE WILL DO. VOLUNTEERS ARE ALREADY MANNING THE DOCKS AND I PAY TRIBUTE TO THOSE WHO HAVE CLOSE. TO STAND BY THEIR COUNTRY IN ITS HOUR OF DIFFICULTY. THEY HAVE LEFT THEIR HOMES AT GREAT IN-
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PAGE 03 SUVA 00851 02 OF 02 140332Z

CONVENIENCE TO THEMSELVES AND AT PERSONAL SACRIFICE. THEY HAVE NOT CHOSEN THIS MEMENT TO HOLD THEIR COUNTRY TO RANSOM FOR THEIR OWN BENEFIT.

24. "TO THE UNION I WOULD SAY YOU STILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO PUT THE NATION BEFORE YOUR OWN SECTIONAL INTEREST. THE MINISTER OF LABOUR HAS REFERRED THIS CASE TO COMPULSORY ARBITRATION AND YOU WILL HAVE THE CHANCE TO PUT YOUR CASE. IF YOU DO NOT MEANWHILE RETURN TO WORK YOU ARE STILL FURTHER IN BREACH OF THE LAW.

25. "TO THE COUNTRY I WOULD SAY, KEEP CALM. DON'T
HOARD FOOD. SOME FIRMS ARE ALREADY SEEKING ALTERNATIVE
SOURCES OF SUPPLY AND I LOOK TO ALL OUR MERCHANTS TO
HELP GOVERNMENT, THE PEOPLE, AND INCIDENTALLY THEMSELVES
IN THIS WAY.

26. "GOVERNMENT WILL KEEP YOUR PORTS OPEN. WE REPUDIATE
THE EFFORTS TO INVOLVE FOREIGN UNIONS IN THIS CONSPIRACY
AGAINST OUR PEOPLE. AND WE SHALL RESIST IT WITH ALL THE
RESOURCES IN OUR POWER.

27. "BUT IT WILL MEAN A TIGHTENING OF BELTS AND A
READINESS TO FACE UP TO ALL THAT WILL BE INVOLVED AND
IT MAY GO ON FOR SOME TIME.

28. "I BELIEVE THAT IN THIS ACTION AND STAND, THE
GOVERNMENT WILL HAVE THE FULL SUPPORT OF ALL RIGHT THINKING
PEOPLE OF GOODWILL."
END TEXT.
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Message Attributes

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